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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000847

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SUBJECT: POWERFUL POLITICAL PARTY COALITION FORMS -- MAKES
BREAK WITH ISRAEL PART OF PLATFORM

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 842

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

(C) Key Points

-- 10 political parties have formed the "Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change" (CFDC), joining together some of Mauritania's most powerful parties.

-- The CFDC has committed to working collectively to prevent any candidates from the former regime from being elected, to form a coalition government if any CFDC parties win the presidency, and to cutting Mauritania's diplomatic ties with Israel.

-- A CFDC member told PolOff that "the Taya era leaders who embezzled and manipulated the Mauritanian people...threaten to retake power...and our coalition was formed to stop them."

(C) Comments

-- The CFDC brings together six of Mauritania's ten most powerful political parties. If the coalition holds together, it will likely do well in the coming legislative elections.

-- However, many parties within the coalition have their own legislative and presidential ambitions, which will pose a challenge to the cohesion of the coalition.

-- Regardless of the future of the coalition, political parties are likely to continue calling for an end to diplomatic relations with Israel (a popular stance with a majority of Mauritanians), raising significant questions about the future of Mauritanian-Israeli relations.

End Key Points and Comments.

A NEW COALITION RISES

¶1. (U) On June 28 ten political parties formed the "Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change" (CFDC). The coalition, which includes some of Mauritania's most powerful political parties, has committed to working collectively to prevent any

candidates from the former regime from being elected, and to form a coalition government if any CFDC parties win the presidency.

¶2. (U) The CFDC rose out of the powerful "Bloc of Eight" coalition, which had formed to collectively negotiate with the government on the run up to elections, but had not planned to work collectively during or after elections. The CFDC, which includes six of the eight parties from the Bloc of Eight, is a more formal coalition aimed at gaining power through party-to-party cooperation. The two Bloc of Eight parties which did not join the CFDC (the Union for Democracy and Progress and SAWAB) said that "ideological difference" led to the split.

¶3. (U) In its first move, the CFDC organized a highly successful pro-Palestinian rally on July 4, which drew thousands of Mauritians to the streets of the capital to support Mauritanian unity with the Palestinian people, and to call on the Mauritanian government to sever its diplomatic relations with Israel (reftel). The coalition has said that ending Mauritanian-Israeli diplomatic relations is one of the core elements of its platform.

FEAR OF FORMER REGIM TAKES CENTER STAGE

4 . (C) The CFDC rally coincided with the announcement by former Minister Sidi Ould Ceeikh Abdellahi that he would run for president. The timing conflict was seen by many as an

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intentional move by the CFDC to draw attention away from Abdellahi, who, while running as an independent, is rumored to be supported by the PRDR (Taya's former political party). Independent candidates (including those with the unofficial backing of the PRDR) are seen as a significant threat to Mauritania's other political parties.

¶5. (C) CFDC member Cheikh Ould M'Hamed told PolOff "we want to have a majority in Parliament and to have the Prime Minister in order to nominate the cabinet members and close the door on the Taya era leaders who embezzled and manipulated the Mauritanian people," adding that "this group threatens to retake power...and our coalition was formed to stop them."

¶6. (U) The ten CFDC parties are:

- The Popular Progressive Alliance (former Bloc of Eight)
 - The Popular Front (former Bloc of Eight)
 - Union for Forces and Progress (former Bloc of Eight)
 - Democratic Renewal (former Bloc of Eight)
 - Gathering of Democratic Forces (former Bloc of Eight)
 - Rally for Mauritania (former Bloc of Eight)
 - Mauritanian Party for Union and Change
 - Democratic Union Party
 - The Central Reformist Party (recognition status pending)
 - The Direct Democratic Movement (recognition status pending)
- LeBaron